

DEPARTMENT OF STATE TELEGRAM

MFG. 9/69

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STATSPEC

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ACTION AID-28

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 IO-13 SR-01 ORM-03 IGA-02 UPW-01 USIE-00
 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-02 INR-07 L-04 NSAE-00 NSC-10
 P-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-20 RSR-01 SCA-01 SPM-01 /115 W

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P R 251056Z APR 70
 FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8108
 INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
 USMISSION GENEVA
 CINCPAC 4789

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENTIANE 2925

DEPT PASS AID, USIA AND DOD

SUBJE CT: REFUGEE HEARINGS

REF: STATE 060695

1. IN VIEW MAY 6 DATE SET BY KENNEDY SUBCOMMITTEE FOR
 HEARINGS ON LAO REFUGEES, WE ARE TRANSMITTING HERE-
 WITH SUBSTANTIVE PORTION OF LETTER TO BE POUCHED
 APRIL 27 FROM DCM TO FRANK BURNETT (EA/LC) SETTING
 FORTH GENERAL LINES THAT DEPT'S TESTIMONY MIGHT
 TAKE. FOLLOWING IS PARTIAL TEXT OF LETTER:

2. QUOTE THE ONLY PLAIN FACT IS THAT THE REFUGEES
 WANT TO GET AWAY FROM THE WAR, FROM PRIVATIONS
 THAT DERIVE FROM THE WAR AND FROM LIFE UNDER THE
 NORTH VIETNAMESE AND PATHET LAO. THEREFORE, TO
 THE EXTENT POSSIBLE, ONE HAS TO AFFIRM AND REAFFIRM
 THAT THE WAR IN LAOS IS CAUSED BY THE PRESENCE OF
 LARGE NUMBERS OF ARMED NORTH VIETNAMESE (NOT BY USAF
 BOMBING) AND THAT NO FINAL SOLUTION TO THE REFUGEE
 PROBLEM IS POSSIBLE AS LONG AS HANOI SEEKS TO ACHIEVE
 ITS POLITICAL AIMS IN NORTHERN LAOS BY MILITARY MEANS.
 AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, THE FOLLOWING ... ARE ...

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THE MOST SENSITIVE AREAS LIKELY TO BE TOUCHED ON IN
THE HEARINGS:

3. BOMBING POLICY. THE INCREASED SORTIE RATES FOR BOTH USAF AND RLAF AIRCRAFT IN THE PAST YEAR HAVE OBVIOUSLY GENERATED SOME REFUGEES. IN OUR OPINION, HOWEVER, THIS HAS NOT BEEN THE PRINCIPAL FACTOR. AERIAL SUPPORT FOR THE LAO GOVERNMENT FORCES HAS BEEN NECESSARY TO COMPENSATE FOR THE RLG'S WEAKNESS ON THE GROUND. AIRSTRIKES HAVE BEEN DIRECTED PRIMARILY AT ENEMY TROOP CONCENTRATIONS, LINES OF COMMUNICATION, AND MILITARY SUPPLIES. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE RELATIVELY SHORT PERIOD OF OPERATION "ABOUT FACE" IN THE AUTUMN OF 1969, LAO GOVERNMENT FORCES HAVE BEEN MOVING BACKWARDS, USUALLY FIGHTING REAR-GUARD ACTIONS TO PROTECT THEIR FLANKS AND TO PREVENT FRIENDLY POSITIONS FROM BEING OVERRUN. THUS, IT IS THE ALMOST INEXORABLE MOVEMENT FORWARD OF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE WHICH HAS UPROOTED THE INHABITANTS OF DISPUTED AREAS, NOT THE RETREAT OF THE DEFENDERS.

4. THE TRUTH OF THIS CAN BE SEEN IN AN ENUMERATION OF THE FRIENDLY POSITIONS WHICH IN RECENT MONTHS HAVE BEEN ATTACKED BY THE NVA. ALL OF THE 78,000 INHABITANTS OF THE SAM THONG/LONG TIENG COMPLEX WHO HAVE RECENTLY BECOME REFUGEES WERE UPROOTED BY THE NORTH VIETNAMESE OFFENSIVE SOUTHWEST OF THE PLAIN OF JARS. ALMOST 30,000 REFUGEES MOVED EARLIER FROM THE MUONG MOC AND BAN DONE AREAS WHEN THE 271ST NORTH VIETNAMESE REGIMENT BECAME ACTIVE LATE LAST YEAR NORTH AND EAST OF PAKSANE. TWENTY THOUSAND PEOPLE HAVE BEEN PUSHED OUT OF THEIR TRADITIONAL HOMES IN HOUA KHONG PROVINCE (SITE 184) BECAUSE OF NVA MILITARY PRESSURE. THE SAME IS TRUE OF THE FRIENDLY POPULATION NOW BEING EVACUATED FROM PHOU SAM SOUN (SITE 231). IN NONE OF THESE CASES DID BOMBING PLAY ANY PART IN THE GENERATION OF REFUGEES. WHATEVER AIR ACTIVITIES OCCURRED WERE AGAINST ATTACKING ENEMY FORCES AND TO PREVENT THE UPROOTING OF FRIENDLY POPULATIONS.

5. IT SEEMS TO US THAT THE CITATION OF EXAMPLES LIKE THESE MAY HELP CORRECT WHATEVER IMPRESSION EXISTS

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ON THE COMMITTEE THAT THE RLG, WITH US SUPPORT IS
FOLLOWING A SCORCHED-EARTH POLICY OR HAS LITTERED
LAOS WITH FREE-STRIKE ZONES. ON THE LATTER POINT,
THERE IS AMPLE MATERIAL AVAILABLE IN THE SYMINGTON
SUBCOMMITTEE TESTIMONY AND FROM OTHER SOURCES TO
DEMONSTRATE THE EXTREME CARE THAT IS TAKEN HERE
AND BY THE AIR FORCE TO AVOID CIVILIAN CASUALTIES.
THERE IS, OF COURSE, NO WAY TO PROVE THAT INNOCENT
PEOPLE ARE NOT SOMETIMES KILLED. WE KNOW THEY ARE
IN THIS AS IN ALL WARS. WE ARE CONVINCED, HOWEVER,
THAT THE GREATEST HUMAN DISLOCATIONS ARE CAUSED
NOT FROM THE AIR BUT ON THE GROUND BY NVN OFFENSIVES.
GP-3
GODLEY

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P R 251056Z APR 70

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8109
INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USMISSION GENEVA
CINCPAC 4790

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 VIENTIANE 2925

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6. POPULATION CONTROL. WE HAVE SEEN OCCASIONAL NEWSPAPER ARTICLES CLAIMING THAT THE RLG AND THE US FOLLOW A CYNICAL POLICY OF POPULATION CONTROL TO OPEN UP AREAS TO TACTICAL BOMBING AND TO DEPRIVE THE NORTH VIETNAMESE OF LABOR. HERE AGAIN, IN OUR OPINION, THE CART HAS BEEN PUT BEFORE THE HORSE. THE AIRLIFTING OF APPROXIMATELY 15,000 REFUGEES FROM THE PLAIN OF JARS EARLIER THIS YEAR WAS NECESSITATED BY EVIDENCE OF NORTH VIETNAMESE PREPARATION TO RECAPTURE THE PLAIN. THE LAO GOVERNMENT REQUESTED US ASSISTANCE IN PROVIDING AN AIRLIFT OF THE VILLAGERS TO SAFEHAVENS AWAY FROM THE BATTLE FRONT. NONE WAS MOVED AGAINST HIS WILL. THE WISHES OF ALL WERE CAREFULLY CANVASSED BY THE RLG AND ONLY A HANDFUL ELECTED TO REMAIN.

7. FAR FROM WISHING TO DEPOPULATE THIS AREA, THE LAO GOVERNMENT HAD BRIEFLY ENTERTAINED THE HOPE THAT IT COULD

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BE TURNED INTO A PROSPEROUS AGRICULTURAL COMPLEX.
SOME INHABITANTS OF THE REGION HAD MOVED BACK INTO
THE PLAIN WITH THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE RLG. LAT
SEN, IN THE SOUTHEAST PDJ, GREW OVER THE COURSE OF
A FEW MONTHS INTO A THRIVING COMMUNITY OF ALMOST
TEN THOUSAND PEOPLE.

8. THIS DREAM OF A POPULATED AND VIABLE MOUNTAIN
PLATEAU WAS DASHED BY THE NORTH VIETNAMESE OFFENSIVE
IN FEBRUARY OF THIS YEAR. THE UNITED STATES SUPPLIED
THE AIR LIFT TO EVACUATE THE INHABITANTS OF LAT SEN
AND NEARBY VILLAGES, NOT TO OPEN THE AREA FOR BOMBING,
BUT TO GET THEM OUT OF THE PATH OF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE
ATTACK. THERE HAS IN FACT BEEN LITTLE OR NO BOMBING IN THIS
PART OF THE PDJ.

9. IT IS TRUE THAT IN RECOMMENDING THE EVACUATION OF
PEOPLE FROM THE AREAS ABOUT TO BE OVERRUN BY THE NORTH
VIETNAMESE, THE FLG (AND OURSELVES) HAVE BEEN WELL
AWARE THAT THIS ACTION WOULD DEPRIVE THE OTHER SIDE
OF A POTENTIAL SOURCE OF LABOR. THIS, HOWEVER, HAS
NEVER BEEN A PRINCIPAL REASON FOR EVACUATION. IT
IS EQUALLY TRUE THAT THE VILLAGERS THEMSELVES DREAD
BEING USED AS PORTERS AND COOLIES BY THE NORTH VIET-
NAMESE AND THAT THIS IS ONE OF THEIR MOST IMPORTANT
OBJECTIONS TO LIVING UNDER NVN/PL CONTROL. WYNN
MCKEITHEN'S EXCELLENT STUDY OF THE ATTITUDES OF
VILLAGERS EVACUATED FROM THE XIENG KHOUANGVILLE
AREA BRINGS THIS AND OTHER POINTS OUT WITH GREAT
CLARITY.

10. IN CONCLUSION, THEREFORE, WE WOULD LIKE IF POSSIBLE
TO SEE THE EMPHASIS IN THE DEPARTMENT'S PRESENTATION
AT THE SUBCOMMITTEE'S HEARINGS PLACED ON:

(A) THE FACT THAT REFUGEES IN ALL WARS ARE CREATED
PRIMARILY BY OFFENSIVE MILITARY ACTIONS;
(B) THAT IN THE LAOS CONFLICT, THIS MEANS NORTH
VIETNAMESE MILITARY ACTIONS;

(C) THAT DELIBERATE EVACUATION OF CIVILIAN INHABITANTS
OF SOME REGIONS HAS BEEN UNDERTAKEN FOR HUMANITARIAN

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REASONS;

(C) THAT, ALTHOUGH WE ARE NOT FATUOUS OR CYNICAL
ENOUGH TO CLAIM THAT BOMBS ARE GOOD FOR PEOPLE, WE
BELIEVE THAT THE BEST POSSIBLE CONTROLS ARE BEING
EXERCISED TO AVOID INJURY TO INNOCENT PEOPLE;

AND (E) THAT A VERY LARGE SLICE OF OUR TOTAL AID
BUDGET IS DEVOTED TO CARE AND FEEDING OF THE REFUGEE
POPULATION.

11. IN THE LATTER CONNECTION, WE WILL BE SUBMITTING LAO
GOVERNMENT FIGURES WHICH SHOW THAT THE MORTALITY
RATE AND INCIDENCE OF DISEASE AMONG LAO REFUGEES IS
RAMARKABLY LOW, DUE TO EFFECTIVE RLG REFUGEE
PROGRAMS TO WHICH THE US IS THE MAIN CONTRIBUTOR.
END QUOTE. GP-3
G ODLEY

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